

Observations on green loopers (*Chrysodeixis argentifera* and *C. eriosema*) feeding on lavender – On 15 July, 1999, while visiting the Bookcaffe at the corner of Douglas Avenue and Mill Point Road, South Perth, we noted a green looper caterpillar attempting to spin a cocoon on the outside of the window. Closer inspection revealed a number of looper caterpillars feeding on the ornamental lavender (*Lavendula*: Lamiaceae) bushes cultivated in the Bookcaffe's planter boxes.

Larval specimens at various stages of development were collected for examination and to be photographed. The pupae were enclosed in flimsy silk cocoons, on the foliage of the food plant (except for the specimen attached to the window). The pupae were green to begin with and slowly darkened to black. The adult moth hatched approximately three weeks after pupation.

The moth was identified as *Chrysodeixis*

*eriosema* (Doubleday), Lepidoptera: Noctuidae: Plusiinae by András Szitó, Entomologist/Curator, Plant Research and Development Services, Agriculture Western Australia, where voucher specimens are now lodged.

On 2 June 2001 larvae were again collected from the same location and adult moths hatched out. Specimens were forwarded to CSIRO Entomology in Canberra where they were identified by Mr E.D. Edwards. The moth specimens were identified as *Chrysodeixis argentifera* (Guen.) and *C. eriosoma*.

Three of the four Australian species of *Chrysodeixis* Hübner are well known pests of crop plants. *Chrysodeixis argentifera* is an endemic species that occasionally appears in New Zealand and Norfolk Island. It is common throughout most of Australia and is often involved in long-distance migration. The larvae is chiefly a pest of tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*: Solanaceae), but also attacks tomato

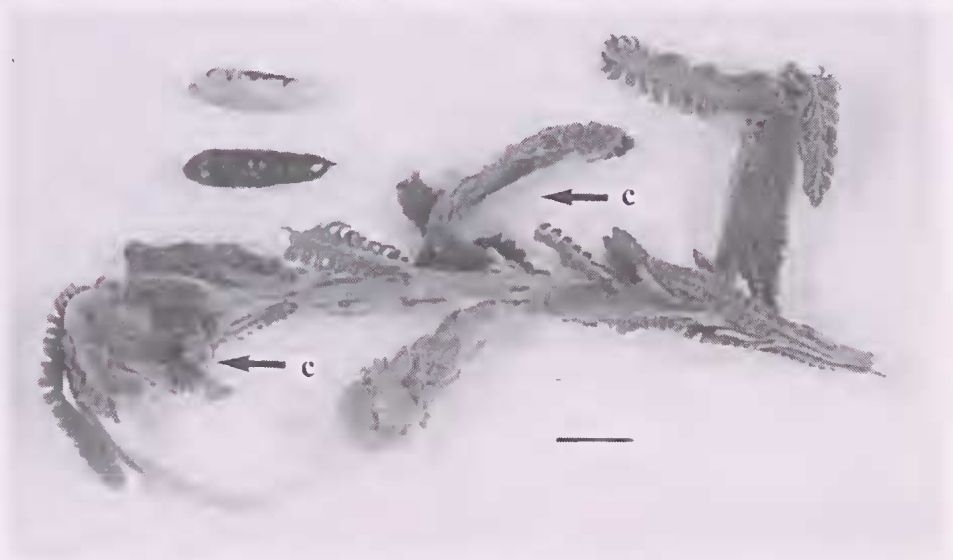


Figure 1 Lavender flower spike showing flimsy silk cocoons of *Chrysodeixis* underneath leaves (indicated by a "c") and two pupae at different stages of development.



Figure 2. Adult male moth of *Chrysodeixis eriosema* showing the scale tufts on the abdomen.

(*Lycopersicon*: Solanaceae). *C. eriosoma* (Dbl.) occurs throughout much of the oriental and asian regions, including the islands of the south Pacific as far east as Easter Island. It is known throughout northern and eastern Australia. In Australia it is mainly a pest of vegetables and garden ornamentals including bean (*Phaseolus*: Fabaceae), tomato (*Lycopersicon*: Solanaceae), mint (*Mentha*), *Coleus* (both Lamiaceae),

*Dahlia* (Asteraceae), and morning glory (*Ipomoea*: Convolvulaceae), but at times damages the young foliage and fruit of *Citrus* (Rutaceae) (Common, I.F.B. 1990 *Moths of Australia*, Melb. Uni Press).

Although *C. eriosema* has been recorded feeding on other genera within the Lamiaceae, this appears to be the first record of both species of looper larvae feeding on lavender.

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